

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 1776

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS : ETRD, TC

SUBJECT : FORD AND THE BOYCOTT

1. DURING CONVERSATION WITH ECON OFFICER, AHMAD MANSOUR, UNDER SECRETARY, UAE MINISTRY OF PLANNING, SAID THE FORD MOTOR COMPANY HAD BEEN IN CONTACT WITH UAE PRESIDENT SHAIKH ZAYID AND OTHER ADVISORS IN ATTEMPT TO LIFT BOYCOTT RESTRICTIONS. ACCORDING MANSOUR, ORIGINAL APPROACH TO FORD MADE BY QUOTE FORMER CLERK WHO NOW MILLIONAIRE UNQUOTE (READ MAHDI TAJIR). PROPOSAL WAS THAT IN EXCHANGE FOR SOME TYPE OF DIRECT INVESTMENT IN UAE, ZAYID WOULD UNILATERALLY LIFT BOYCOTT RESTRICTIONS. SCENARIO BROKE DOWN HOWEVER, PRIMARILY BECAUSE OTHER ADVISORS CAUTIONED ZAYID AGAINST TAKING SUCH RISKY POLITICAL MOVE. HOW COULD ARAB LEADER WHO INITIATED OIL BOYCOTT OF U.S. IN 1973 WELCOME FORD COMPANY TO UAE OF IT STILL DOING BUSINESS WITH ISRAEL? MANSOUR LEFT OPEN WHETHER ANY KIND OF AGREEMENT HAD BEEN REACHED, BUT STATED CATEGORICALLY THAT FORD WOULD SLOWLY REDUCE SALES TO ISRAEL. HE GAVE IMPRESSION THAT ONCE SALES WERE LOW ENOUGH, FORD WOULD BE FREE OF BOYCOTT RESTRICTIONS.

2. EXACT TRUTH OF THIS STORY CERTAINLY FAR FROM ESTABLISHED AND PROBABLY NEVER WILL BE. IT DOES TEND TO SUBSTANTIATE RUMORS WE HAVE PICKED UP THAT TRUCK ASSEMBLY PLANT SPONSORED BY OMISCIENT TAJIR NO LONGER IN THE CARDS. ON OTHER HAND, CONFIDENTIAL

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CONDITION THAT FORD WOULD HAVE TO REDUCE MARKET EXPOSURE IN

ISRAEL IS ENTIRELY NEW ADDITION TO FORD COMPANY TALES WHICH
HAVE BEEN CIRCULATING IN UAE FOR OVER A YEAR. WHETHER THIS
CONDITION IMPOSED BY ZAYID AND HIS ADVISORS ON OWN INITIATIVE
OR LAID DOWN BY ISRAELI BOYCOTT OFFICE IS QUESTION WE CANNOT
ANSWER BUT TEND TO THINK FORMER ALTERNATIVE MOST PLAUSIBLE.
IT IS KNOWN THAT CERTAIN MEMBERS OF ZAYID'S FAIMLY ANXIOUS
TO ESTABLISH TRUCK AND CAR ASSEMBLY PLANTS SANS TAJIR. TAJIR
HAS OTHER FIELDS TO PLOW HOWEVER, AND WE UNDERSTAND DUBAI'S
RULER, SHAIKH RASHID, READY TO POUNCE ON FORD MOTOR COMPANY
AGENCY ONCE CAIRO GIVES THE GREEN LIGHT.
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